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Ghazālī, Descartes, and Hume: The Genealogy of Some Philosophical Ideas*

CEMIL AKDOGAN

Introduction

We can trace the origins of modern philosophy back to Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (450–505/1058–1111) who anticipated some of the major ideas at which René Descartes (1596–1650) and David Hume (1711–1776) arrived in the course of their study and philosophical speculation. Although their frameworks are different, the parallel between Ghazālī and Descartes, particularly on the issues of absolute truth, scepticism, dreamlike reality, and the separation of soul from body, is very conspicuous. As for Hume's work on causality which prompted Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) to write his famous *Critique of Pure Reason*, it is fundamentally not more than what Ghazālī accomplished on the same subject a long time ago.

Ghazālī's Scepticism

In his *Deliverance from Error* we find Ghazālī concerned with discovering the absolute truth. To that extent he went through a period of personal scepticism during which he even doubted the truth of sense-data, logic, and mathematics. He also compared conscious states such as wakefulness or sense data to the state of dreaming. Later, his belief in logic, mathematics and self evident ideas was restored. As we know, these features also exist in Descartes' philosophy. The main difference between them is that Ghazālī works within the framework of Islamic theology in which there is "no problem of God", whereas Descartes begins with the problem of God and places his emphasis upon human mind or secular philosophy.

In order to discover the absolute truth, Ghazālī refused to conform to authority even in matters of faith:

* The author is grateful to Professor Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas who read the first draft of this article and graciously steered me away from some mistakes.

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> The thirst for grasping the real meaning of things was indeed my habit and wont from my early years...As a result, the fetters of servile conformism fell away from me, and inherited beliefs lost their hold on me, when I was still quite young. For I saw that the children of Christians always grew up embracing Christianity, and the children of Jews always grew up adhering to Judaism, and the children of Muslims always grew up following the religion of Islam. I also heard the tradition related from the Apostle of God — God's blessing and peace be upon him! — in which he said: "Every infant is born endowed with the *fiṭra*: then his parents make him Jew or Christian or Magian. Consequently I felt an inner urge to seek the true meaning of the original *fiṭra*, and the true meaning of the beliefs arising through slavish aping of parents and teachers. I wanted to sift out these uncritical beliefs, the beginnings of which are suggestions imposed from without, since there are differences of opinion in the discernment of those that are true from those that are false.
>
> So I began by saying to myself: "What I seek is knowledge of the true meaning of things. Of necessity, therefore, I must inquire into just what the true meaning of knowledge is".[1]

If authority in matters of faith is not trustworthy,[2] then is it possible to believe in sense perception and necessary truths that seem to be self-evident? Ghazālī responded to this inquiry as follows:

> I ... scrutinized all my cognitions and found myself devoid of any knowledge...except in the case of sense-data and self-evident truths. So I said: "Now that despair has befallen me, the only hope I have of acquiring an insight into obscure matters is to start from things that are perfectly clear, namely sense-data and the self-evident truths..." With great earnestness, therefore, I began to reflect on my sense-data to see if I could make myself doubt them. This protracted effort to induce doubt finally brought me to the point where my soul would not allow me to admit safety from error even in the case of my sense-data. Rather it began to be open to doubt about them.[3]

So to distinguish absolute truth from falsity, Ghazālī also doubted the reliability of sense data and self-evident truths. In order to show that sense data

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[1] Trans., Richard Joseph McCarthy, S. J., *Freedom and Fulfillment: An Annotated Translation of Al-Ghazali's al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl and Other Relevant Works of al-Ghazali* (Boston, Twayne Publishers, 1980), 63.

[2] A. I. Sabra makes the same claim for all *kalām*: "All kalām, whether that of the Mu'tazila or of the later, 'orthodox' Ash'arites, declares itself against the passive acceptance of authority in matters of faith, an attitude which it calls by the name of taqlīd (the imitation or unquestioning following of authority), and which it seeks, expressly and as a matter of principle, to replace by a state of knowledge ('ilm) rooted in reason ('akl)". See his article, "Science and Philosophy in Medieval Islamic Theology" in *Zeitschrift für Geschichte der Arabisch-Islamischen Wissenschaften*, Band 9, 1995, 9.

[3] Trans., Richard Joseph McCarthy, S. J., *Freedom and Fulfillment*, 64.

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or the things we clearly perceive such as our wakefulness may be deceitful, he offered the example of dreams:

> . . . sense-data reinforced their difficulty by an appeal to dreaming, saying: Don't you see that when you are asleep you believe certain things and imagine certain circumstances and believe they are fixed and lasting and entertain no doubts about that being their status? Then you wake up and know that all your imaginings and beliefs were groundless and unsubstantial.[4]

Surely, sense data sometimes deceive us. For instance, when we look at a star we see it as big as a coin. But actually it might well be bigger than even the whole earth itself. How do we know this? Of course, through our intellect (the reason-judge), i.e. geometrical calculations.[5] Then how about mathematical and logical truths: can we trust them? According to Ghazālī, we cannot even trust them, since they may also deceive us:

> Perhaps...I can rely only on those rational data which belong to the category of primary truths, such as our asserting that 'Ten is more than three', and 'One and the same thing cannot be simultaneously affirmed and denied', and 'One and the same thing cannot be incipient and eternal, existent and nonexistent, necessary and impossible'.
>
> Then sense-data spoke up: "What assurance have you that your reliance on rational data is not like your reliance on sense-data? Indeed, you used to have confidence in me. Then the reason-judge came along and gave me the lie. But were it not for the reason-judge, you would still accept me as true. So there may be, beyond the perception of reason, another judge. And if the latter revealed itself, it would give the lie to the judgements of reason, just as the reason-judge revealed itself and gave the lie to the judgements of sense. The mere fact of the nonappearance of that further perception does not prove the impossibility of its existence".[6]

After God cured Ghazālī of this extreme scepticism, which had lasted about two months, he once again began to believe in "the self-evident data of reason and relied on them with safety and certainty".[7]

Ghazālī also distinguished between body and soul in his *al-Risālah al-Laduniyyah*[8] (sic) not in order to arrive at a dualism as suggested by Fazlur

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[4] Ibid., 65.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid., 66.

[8] The author of the article and some other scholars have transliterated Ghazālī's treatise as above, that is, with only one 'n'. With due respect to our learned author and to those scholars, it would be pertinent to point out that phonetically it is incorrect. The right transliteration

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Rahman and others, but to place humanity outside and above the nature. According to him, the soul of human beings directly originates from God Himself and that is why it is immaterial, immortal, special and unique as compared to the body or the rest of natural creation. As a result, man is no longer a passive part of the natural order as stipulated by some religions and ancient philosophies, but a vicegerent on earth.

In Ghazālī's view, "God Most High created man from two different things, one of them the body, which is...subject to generation and corruption, composite, made up of parts, earthy, whose nature cannot be complete except by means of something else, and that other is the soul, which is substantial, simple, enlightened, comprehending, acting, moving, giving completion to instruments and bodies".[9]

Thus he made soul pivotal to his metaphysics and distinguished it from body.[10] Without soul body is not complete and cannot function. As Ghazālī states:

> The body is subject to dissolution as it was subject to being compounded of matter and form, which is set forth in the books. And from...verses and traditions and intellectual proofs, we have come to know that the spirit [the soul] is a simple substance, perfect, having life in itself, and from it is derived what makes the body sound or what corrupts it.[11]

Ghazālī ended the hold of ancient philosophy by freeing the human soul from its material attachments and making it originate from God.[12] So, long before Descartes and other modern philosophers[13] he revolutionized

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would be *Ladunniyah*. In deference to the author's wish, however, we have retained the author's transliteration of the title of this work. Ed.

[9] Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *al-Risālah al-Laduniyyah*, Part II, trans., Margaret Smith in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1938), 193.

[10] To distinguish between two things is not necessarily a *dualism*.

[11] Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Risālah al-Laduniyyah*, 197–198.

[12] As we know, soul was part of the cosmos in the Greek philosophy. It was made up of delicate materials such as pure water, pure air, pure fire or light atoms and was like an inner engine which made things move whether they were objects or human beings. Even Plato placed soul between the perfect ideas and the sensory world and made it part of the world. As for Aristotle, it is the form which is not separable from body or matter. In other words, soul cannot exist independently of body and thus in the Islamic world Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Rushd who were Aristotelians could not satisfactorily explain the immortality of human souls. Furthermore, they all accepted that the active intellect, which is immortal, did not belong to particular individuals, but rather to the whole human species. Thus, according to Greek and Islamic philosophers, soul either originated from matter or was part of the world or body.

[13] Descartes and some other modern philosophers such as Kant also insisted that human beings are unique and that they are *not* animals, but they did so in a secular context. Stuart G. Shanker

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metaphysics on the basis of the Qur'ān:

> God related the spirit sometimes to Himself and sometimes to His command and sometimes to His glory for He said: "I breathed into him of My Spirit", and He said also: "Say, the Spirit (proceedeth) at the command of my Lord". Also He said: "And We breathed into him of Our Spirit". Now God Most High is too glorious to attach unto Himself a body or an accident, because of their lowliness and their liability to change and their swift dissolution and corruption.[14]

Ghazālī defined the soul as "perfect, simple substance which is concerned solely with remembering and studying and reflection and discrimination and careful consideration",[15] and made it a different and independent substance. It is no longer a subtle matter or a collection of atoms or an accident.[16] Although the body is inanimate, mortal, and imperfect, the soul is alive, immortal and perfect.[17] More importantly, the souls created by God in a special way are the only direct links between God and man.

For Ghazālī, "man is both soul and body, he is at once physical being and spirit, and his soul governs his body".[18] This dual nature of man does not necessarily imply a dualism, since, in his view, soul and body are two different aspects of the same entity, i.e. man. Furthermore, there is an interaction between them, i. e. "soul is a spiritual principle which having life in itself vitalizes the body and controls it and regulates it. Body is the instrument and

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explains this point with regard to Descartes as follows:

> Descartes...[repudiates] the orthodox doctrine of the 'Great Chain of Being'. He is insisting that there is a hiatus between animals and man that cannot be filled by any 'missing links'. The body may be a machine (which was itself a heretical view), but man, by his abilities to reason, to speak a language, to direct his actions and to be conscious of his cognitions, is categorically *not* an animal. There is no hint in the *Discourse* that any of these attributes can be possessed in degrees...When Aristotle tells us that 'Man is by nature a political animal', or Seneca that 'Man is a reasoning animal', the emphasis is on *animal*: one analyses man as an *animal species* (see the opening chapter of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*). But all this is changed in the *Discourse* of Descartes. See Stuart G. Shanker, ed., *Philosophy of Science, Logic and Mathematics in the Twentieth Century* (London: Routledge, 1996), 316. Descartes discusses the differences between human beings and animals at the end of Part V of his *Discourse*.

[14] Al-Ghazālī, *al-Risālah al-Laduniyyah*, Part II, 197.

[15] Ibid., 194.

[16] Ibid., 196–197.

[17] Ibid., 197.

[18] Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism*, 69. On this point al- Ghazālī is very clear: Man is "composed of an outward shape, called the body, and an inward entity called...soul...which uses all the other faculties as its instruments and servants". Al Ghazālī, *The Alchemy of Happiness*, trans., Claud Field (London: The Octagon Press, 1980), 18–19.

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vehicle of the soul".[19]

But Descartes, as the representative of the seventeenth century philosopher-scientists, emphasised the real distinction between soul (secondary qualities) and body (primary qualities) and made them independent and complete substances. That is why, if not he, at least his followers (Cartesians) tried to "cut all connection between...[soul and body in order] to establish...a rigorous parallelism between them [through] a divine mechanism".[20]

Ghazālī, instead of accepting such a real distinction, simply distinguished soul from body and made them interdependent. "The human soul, though independent of the body, yet requires the body in this physical world"[21] to govern it, to perceive things, and to interpret "the worlds of sense and sensible experience, of images, and of intelligible forms or ideas".[22]

Ghazālī on the Problem of Causality

In order to affirm God's omnipotence Ghazālī attacked the necessary connection between external events, thus anticipating Hume's work on the concept of causality.

In Ghazālī's view, God causes everything; therefore, there is no room for secondary causation. In order to explain this point further, Ghazālī asserted that:

> The connection between what is habitually believed to be a cause and what is habitually believed to be an effect is not necessary, according to us. But [with] any two things, where "this" is not "that" and "that" is not "this", and where neither the affirmation of the one entails the affirmation of the other nor the negation of the one entails negation of the other, it is not a necessity of the existence of the one that the other should exist, and it is not a necessity of the nonexistence of the one that the other should not exist — for example, the quenching of thirst and drinking, satiety and eating, burning and contact with fire, light and the appearance of the sun, death and decapitation, healing and the drinking of medicine, the purging of the bowels and the using of a purgative, and so on to [include] all [that is] observable among connected things in medicine, astronomy, arts, and crafts. Their connection is due to the prior decree of God, who creates them side by side, not to its being necessary in itself, incapable of separation. On the contrary, it is within [divine] power to create satiety without eating, to create death without decapitation, to continue life after decapitation,

[19] M. M. Sharif, ed., *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, 2 vols. (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1963), 620.
[20] Henry Bergson, *Creative Evolution* (Mineola, N Y: Dover Publications, Inc., 1998), 350.
[21] Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1995), 165.
[22] Ibid., 171.

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> and so on to all connected things. The philosophers denied the possibility of [this] and claimed it to be impossible.[23]

According to Ghazālī, the relationship or connection between a cause and an effect is not necessary. Two things or events follow one another, but one does not affect the other in any way, since both things are passive and inanimate. For instance, fire does not actually burn a piece of cotton, but God does. According to Ghazālī, "fire, which is inanimate,... has no action. For what proof is there that it is an agent? They [the philosophers] have no proof other than observing the occurrence of the burning at the [juncture of] contact with the fire. Observation, however, [only] shows the occurrence [of burning] at [the time of the contact with the fire], but does not show the occurrence [of burning] *by* [the fire] and that there is no other cause for it".[24]

Ghazālī further states that "the continuous habit of [the] ... occurrence [of burning] repeatedly, one time after another, fixes unshakably in our minds the belief in [its] occurrence according to past habit".[25] If we use Kant's terminology, here Ghazālī claims that "the understanding [i.e. our intellect]...derive[s] its laws from... nature [i.e. experience]".[26] In other words, our mind or intellect does not impose laws upon nature.

Descartes: His Scepticism and Dualism

Descartes, the first architect of the modern philosophy, followed the method of Ghazālī, but he placed the emphasis on philosophy or human reason rather than theology:

> I have always thought that two issues — namely, God and the soul — are chief among those that ought to be demonstrated with the aid of philosophy rather than theology.[27]

Like Ghazālī, however, Descartes also rejected authority or custom and relied solely on his own reasoning:

> I considered how one and the same man with the very same mind, were he

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[23] Al-Ghazālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, trans., Michael E. Marmura (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1997), 170.
[24] Ibid., 171.
[25] Ibid., 174.
[26] Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, trans. Lewis White Beck (Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1950), 67.
[27] René Descartes, *Discourse on Method* and *Meditations on First Philosophy*, fourth edition, trans., Donald A. Cress (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1998), 47.

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> brought up from infancy among the French or the Germans, would become different from what he would be had he always lived among the Chinese or the cannibals...Thus it is mere custom and example that persuades us than any certain knowledge; and yet the majority opinion is worthless as a proof of truths that are at all difficult to discover, since it is much more likely that one man would have found them than a whole multitude of people. Hence I could not choose anyone whose opinions seemed to me should be preferred over those of the others, and I found myself, as it were, constrained to try to guide myself on my own.[28]

After establishing his self-responsibility in finding the absolute truth, Descartes also doubted the reliability of senses on the grounds that they sometimes deceive us. For instance, to misjudge things is possible if they are far away or not clearly perceptible. But how about the things that we clearly perceive such as our wakefulness or the fire in front of which we are sitting? Descartes argues that we can even be wrong about them. To prove this point he uses dreams as Ghazālī had done so a long time ago:

> How often does my evening slumber persuade me of such ordinary things as these: that I am here, clothed in my dressing gown, seated next to the fireplace-when in fact I am lying undressed in bed! But right now my eyes are certainly wide awake when I gaze upon this sheet of paper. This head which I am shaking is not heavy with sleep. I extend this hand consciously and deliberately, and I feel it. Such things would not be so distinct for someone who is asleep. As if I did not recall having been deceived on other occasions even by similar thoughts in my dreams! As I consider these matters more carefully, I see so plainly that there are no definitive signs by which to distinguish being awake from being asleep. As a result, I am becoming quite dizzy, and this dizziness nearly convinces me that I am asleep.[29]

Then he doubted necessary truths by raising the following question:

> Since I judge that others sometimes make mistakes in matters that they believe they know most perfectly, may I not, in like fashion, be deceived every time I add two and three or count the sides of a square, or perform an even simpler operation, if that can be imagined?[30]

However, Descartes's scepticism lasted only for a short while. In order to begin with a new slate he first demonstrated the existence of his mind or consciousness to his satisfaction. Although he could doubt everything, he

[28] Ibid., 9.
[29] Ibid., 60.
[30] Ibid., 61.

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could not doubt that he was doubting or thinking. In this manner he arrived at his "first and most certain" proposition: *I think, therefore, I am.*:

> While rejecting ... all those things which we can somehow doubt, and even imagining them to be false, we can indeed easily suppose that there is no God, no heaven, no material bodies; and even that we ourselves have no hands, or feet, in short, no body; yet we do not on that account suppose that we, who are thinking such things, are nothing: for it is contradictory for us to believe that that which thinks, at the very time when it is thinking, does not exist. And, accordingly, this knowledge, *I think, therefore I am*, is the first and most certain to be acquired by and present itself to anyone who is philosophizing in correct order.[31]

Thus he made the existence of his consciousness or mind the cornerstone of his philosophy. His next step was to prove the existence of both God and physical reality. Descartes himself tells us how he proceeded:

> I took the being or the existence of...mind as the first Principle. From this I very clearly deduced the following: that there is a God who is the author of everything which is in the world; and who, being the source of all truth, did not make our understanding of a nature such that it could be mistaken in the judgment it makes of things of which it has a very clear and very distinct perception. Those are all the Principles which I use concerning immaterial or Metaphysical things. And from those Principles, I very clearly deduce the Principles of corporeal or Physical things; namely, that there are bodies extended in length, width, and depth, which have diverse figures and are moved in diverse ways. There, in short, are all the Principles from which I deduce the truth of other things.[32]

Although Descartes tried to prove the existence of God by depending on the idea of a perfect being in his mind, he was not successful in this attempt. Since we know today, due to Kant's work, that the existence of God can neither be proven nor disproven through rational means. As Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas admirably explains:

> Descartes established the existence of the self, the existence of the individual creature, man, to himself by means of empirical intuition; this does not necessarily establish the existence of objects outside of thought. In the case of the existence of God, the more impossibly complicated it became, seeing that unlike man He is not subject to empirical intuition. Now what is more problematic

[31] René Descartes, *Principles of Philosophy*, trans., Valentine Rodger Miller and Reese P. Miller (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1983), Article 7, Part 1: 5.
[32] Ibid., from the "Letter from the Author", xxii.

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> about the existence of God is that since His being in thought, His Essence, cannot be known, and since His Being is identical with His Existence, it follows that His Existence also cannot be known. His existence...can be known only if the identity of His Being and His Existence can be demonstrated rationally, which is not possible to accomplish. At least up till the present time the idea that God's existence can *rationally* be demonstrated is only a matter of *faith*.[33]

Descartes' "system was ideally suited to the needs of 17th century science. It left a place for God and thereby averted the charge that dropping spirit and taking everything as matter must make atheists; and it separated mind and matter, so that [natural sciences] could forget what impresses the mind so forcibly: [secondary] qualities, meanings, and purposes. Those things were in the mind and not in matter, which is entirely neutral stuff. Such is the view of the [scientist] in the lab today".[34]

According to Descartes, extension in length, width, and depth constitutes the nature of body or matter whereas thought constitutes the nature of soul. Thus, like Ghazālī, Descartes also separated the human soul from the body and assigned similar attributes to soul:

> By the word 'thought', I understand all those things which occur in us while we are conscious, insofar as the consciousness of them is in us. And so not only understanding, willing, and imagining, but also sensing, are here the same as thinking.[35]

Soul is alive, active, and immaterial whereas body or matter is inanimate, passive, and material. Soul is spiritual and does not occupy a space, but body does. In other words, soul cannot be touched or felt physically, because it is not material. Philosophically speaking, it has no extension, and in this respect it is similar to God. That is why Descartes divorced soul from body by making it a thinking substance that does not perish even after the death of the body:

> I knew that I was a substance the whole essence or nature of which is simply to think, and which, in order to exist, has no need of any place nor depends on any material thing. Thus this "I", that is to say, the soul through which I am what I am, is entirely distinct from the body and is even easier to know than the body, and even if there were no body at all, it would not cease to be all that it is.[36]

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[33] Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism*, 11.
[34] Jacques Barzun, *From Dawn to Decadence* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2000), 200.
[35] René Descartes, *Principles of Philosophy*, Article 9, Part I: 5.
[36] René Descartes, *Discourse on Method* and *Meditations on First Philosophy*, 19.

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As we can gather from this quotation, soul and body are two distinct, complete and independent substances. Soul is not body and it can exist as it is without having a body. In other words, soul is not body and body is not soul:

> We clearly perceive that extension, or figure, or local motion (or any similar thing which must be attributed to a body) does not belong to our nature, but only the faculty of thinking, which is therefore known prior to and more certainly than any corporeal things.[37]

Moreover, soul and body do not interact, since they are distinct and independent. So, according to Descartes, man is a pair of things and lives two parallel lives in two different and parallel worlds.

Because of this radical dualism of Descartes the soul does not govern the body,[38] since immaterial soul can in no way affect material body. "It then becomes very difficult to account for the evident facts of psycho-physical interaction...Cartesians such as Geulincx, who are generally known as 'occasionalists', refused to admit that two heterogeneous types of substances can act on one another. When interaction apparently takes place, what really occurs is that on the occasion of a psychic event God causes the corresponding physical event, or conversely".[39]

Thus it is crystal clear that "Descartes's universe...is bifurcated. And at its center stands neither the Earth nor the Sun, but the mind of the individual, responding to the world around it".[40]

With this dualism of Descartes the roller coaster of modern philosophy began its journey, swinging between idealism and realism until Kant stopped it temporarily.

Hume on Causality

If we disregard their frameworks, Ghazālī's and David Hume's views on causality are similar. As Eugene A. Myers writes:

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[37] René Descartes, *Principles of Philosophy*, Article 8, Part I: 5.

[38] To please theologians "Descartes himself asserted that the mind can and does act on the body: but his theory of interaction was felt to be one of the least satisfactory features of his system". Furhermore, "on Descartes' principles it would appear to be very difficult to maintain that there is any intrinsic relationship between the two factors [i.e. soul and body]". Frederick Copleston, S. J., *A History of Philosophy* (New York: Image Books, 1994), IV: 12 and 120. IV: 12 and 120.

[39] Ibid., 12.

[40] Stuart G. Shanker, "Descartes' Legacy: the Mechanist/Vitalist Debates" in Stuart G. Shanker, ed., *Philosophy of Science, Logic and Mathematics in the Twentieth Century* (London: Routledge, 1996), 316.

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> Al Ghazzali held that events are brought about by the will of God rather than by external causes. He therefore denied the principle of causality. This view was adopted by the English thinker David Hume (1711–1776), who defined the relationship of cause and effect as the result of recollections rather than of principle, emphasizing that even though one event follows another, the first is not a priori the cause of the second. While al Ghazzali referred the ultimate ground to God, Hume referred the ultimate ground to recollections. The similarity of al Ghazzali's and Hume's thinking on this subject prompted Ernest Renan, the eminent French historian, to remind his readers, "Hume has said [about the causal nexus] nothing more than al Ghazzali had already said".[41]

David Hume, who is a sceptic, evaluates cause-effect relationship after the fashion of Ghazālī, but he does it in a secular context. If two events are conjoined, we call one event cause and the other event effect. Although we can experientially detect no link between them, after observing them together several or more times we feel in our mind that those events are necessarily connected with one another. In the words of Hume:

> When one particular species of event has always, in all instances, been conjoined with another...we call the one object, *Cause*; the other, *Effect*. We suppose that there is some connexion between them; some power in the one, by which it infallibly produces the other, and operates with the greatest certainty and strongest necessity. It appears, then, that this idea of a necessary connexion among events arises from a number of similar instances which occur of the constant conjunction of these events...But there is nothing in a number of instances, different from every single instance, which is supposed to be exactly similar; except only, that after a repetition of similar instances, the mind is carried by habit, upon the appearance of one event, to expect its usual attendant, and to believe that it will exist. This connexion, therefore, which we *feel* in the mind, this customary transition of the imagination from one object to its usual attendant, is the sentiment or impression from which we form the idea of power or necessary connexion.[42]

For both Ghazālī and Hume the law of causality or the cause-effect relationship originates from our experiences and is linked by psychological habit. In other words, our mind acquires the conception of causality after being affected by the habitual succession of events in time. In the words of Hume, "...reason alone can never give rise to any original idea and...that

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[41] Eugene A. Myers, *Arabic Thought and the Western World* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1964), 40.

[42] David Hume, *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, ed., Antony Flew (La Salle: IL, 1988), 114.

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reason, as distinguished from experience, can never make us conclude, that a cause or productive quality is absolutely requisite to every beginning of existence".[43] Kant reiterates how Hume dealt with the problem of causality in the preface of his book, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*:

> Hume started chiefly from a single but important concept in metaphysics, namely, that of the connection of cause and effect...He challenged reason, which pretends to have given birth to this concept of herself, to answer him by what right she thinks anything could be so constituted that if that thing be posited, something else also must necessarily be posited; for this is the meaning of the concept of cause. He demonstrated irrefutably that it was perfectly impossible for reason to think *a priori* and by means of concepts such a combination, for it implies necessity. We cannot at all see why, in consequence of the existence of one thing, another must necessarily exist or how the concept of such a combination can arise *a priori*. Hence he inferred that reason was altogether deluded with reference to this concept, which she erroneously considered as one of her own children, whereas in reality it was nothing but a bastard of imagination, impregnated by experience, which subsumed certain represantations under the law of association and mistook a subjective necessity (habit) for an objective necessity arising from insight. Hence he inferred that reason had no power to think such combinations, even in general, because her concepts would then be purely fictitious and all her pretended *a priori* cognitions nothing but common experiences marked with a false stamp.[44]

Kant wrote his famous *Critique of Pure Reason* to resolve Hume's problem of causality in its widest implications[45] and "found that the concept of the connection of cause and effect was by no means the only concept by which the understanding thinks the connection of things *a priori*, but rather metaphysics consists altogether of such concepts".[46] Those *a priori* concepts such as substance, causality, time, space and quantity impose order on our experiences.

Kant and His Importance in Modern Philosophy

Kant is the supreme philosopher in modern philosophy, since he destroyed the last traces of the ancient worldview from modern philosophy and was able to tie the loose ends existing particularly in the Humean system from his own standpoint. With Kant's approval, Carol. Arnold. Wilmans summarizes Kant's

[43] David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed., L. A. Selby-Bigg, 1888; second rev. ed. by P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 157.
[44] Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, 5–6.
[45] Ibid., 9.
[46] Ibid., 8.

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achievement in the following passage:

> Ancient philosophers were quite mistaken in the role they assigned man in the world, since they considered him a machine within it, entirely dependent on the world or on external things and circumstances, and so made him an all but passive part of the world. Now the critique of reason has appeared and assigned man a thoroughly *active* existence in the world. Man himself is the original maker of all his representations and concepts, and ought to be the sole author of all his actions.[47]

Indeed, with Kant modern philosophy reached its pinnacle. What Kant really achieved is not a synthesis or a compromise between realism and idealism, but the formulation of an original philosophy which rejects those alternatives effectively. If we forget about his fixed categories of the mind, his philosophy still remains to be valid and it is the right one even for the future. The Berkeleian and post-Kantian philosophy, particularly from Fichte until Hegel, is in trouble, because it deliberately cuts off all its ties with reality or things-in-themselves. Of course, in this approach "knowledge gives birth to itself and is capable of affording its own justification".[48]

It is not really a surprise that after Kant the West once again succumbed to dualism with the positivism of the nineteenth century and the logical positivism or the analytical philosophy of the twentieth century at one end and with the speculative or absolute idealism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the postmodernism of the twentieth century at the other end. As a matter of fact, "the West has been an endless series of opposites"[49] or dualisms not only in philosophy, but also in other fields as well.

Kant and the Problem of Causality

Hume woke up Kant from his dogmatic slumber and "gave [his] investigations in the field of speculative philosophy a quite new direction".[50] Kant realised that the concept of causality "was not derived from [nature or] experience, as

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[47] Immanuel Kant, *The Conflict of the Faculties*, ed., Mary J. Gregor (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), 129.

[48] John Dewey, *The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy and Other Essays* (Armherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 1997), 297.

[49] Jacques Barzun, *From Dawn to Decadence*, xiii. I have heard this idea many times from Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas in his Saturday Night Lectures since 1994. He also suggests in his book *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam* that Europe has always swung from one extreme to another. In his own words: "Dualism abides in all aspects of Western life and philosophy: the speculative, the social, the political, the cultural — just as it pervades with equal inexorableness the Western religion". (*Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam*, 86).

[50] Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, 8.

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Hume had attempted to derive [it], but sprang from pure understanding".[51] In Kant's view not only causality but also other concepts such as time and space are known by us *a priori*. So our understanding with its *a priori* concepts "does not derive its laws from, but prescribes them to, nature".[52] With this view "Kant made a decisive advance over all previous philosophers in giving up the idea that any description of the world [is] simply a copy of the world".[53] In other words, the human mind no longer passively reflects reality as a mirror does. Thus Kant achieved the greatest revolution in philosophy or a Copernican revolution. Karl Popper summarises this point rather well:

> We must give up the view that we are passive observers, waiting for nature to impresss its regularity upon us. Instead we must adopt the view that in digesting our sense-data we actively impress the order and the laws of our intellect upon them. Our cosmos bears the imprint of our minds... Copernicus deprived man of his central position in the physical universe. Kant's Copernican Revolution takes the sting out of this. He shows us not only that our location in the physical universe is irrelevant, but also that in a sense our universe may well be said to turn about us; for it is we who produce, at least in part, the order we find in it; it is we who create our knowledge of it. We are discoverers: and discovery is a creative art.[54]

Surely, in acquiring knowledge we both need our active mind or *a priori* concepts as well as sense data. As Kant tells us:

> Without sensibility no object would be given to us, and without understanding none would be thought. Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind. It is thus just as necessary to make the mind's concepts sensible (i.e., to add an object to them in intuition) as it is to make its intuitions understandable (i.e., to bring them under concepts). Further, these two faculties or capacities cannot exchange their functions. The understanding is not capable of intuiting anything, and the senses are not capable of thinking anything. Only from their unification can cognition arise.[55]

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[51] Ibid.

[52] Ibid., 67.

[53] Hilary Putnam, *Pragmatism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 30.

[54] Karl R. Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge*, 4th ed. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), 180–181. According to Islam and al-Ghazali the soul of man is also active and creative. As Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas writes: "The soul is...not something passive; it is creative, and through perception, imagination and intelligence it participates in the 'creation' and interpretation of the worlds of sense and sensible experience, of images, and of intelligible forms or ideas". Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam*, 171.

[55] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and edit. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood

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Thus Kant deftly rejected both realism and idealism by saying that "thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind". As a matter of fact, "the whole course of [philosophy] since Kant's time has tended to justify this remark. The sensationalist [realist] and the rationalist have worked themselves out. Pretty much all students [of philosophy] are convinced that we can reduce knowledge neither to a set of associated sensations, nor yet to a purely rational system of relations of thought. Knowledge is judgement, and judgement requires both a material of sense perception and an ordering, regulating principle, reason; so much seems certain"[56] and inevitable.

Conclusion

As we have seen, Ghazālī's scope of vision is such that he not only anticipated the main ideas of Descartes, the father of the modern philosophy, but also preceded Hume's work on causality which in turn inspired Kant, the supreme philosopher, to achieve the greatest revolution in modern philosophy by relinquishing the correspondence theory of truth.

Since things are always perceived through mind, we cannot know objects or their real properties as they are in themselves. As al-Attas nicely sums up, "in the act of perception, the perceiver perceives the *form* of the external object, that is, an *image* or *representation* of the external reality, and not the reality itself".[57]

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), Part ii, B 76, 193–194.

[56] John Dewey, *The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy and Other Essays*, 297.

[57] Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam*, 150.

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